

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Governor Warner knows that Virginia needs a world-class workforce to compete in the global economy of the 21st century. Unfortunately, Virginia's workforce development system lacks the coordination and accountability necessary to make it effective. Over the past year, Governor Warner has taken the first steps toward creating a better, more coordinated system. He has appointed a nationally recognized Special Advisor for Workforce Development, created a Middle College program, and successfully introduced legislation that streamlined the overall workforce development system.

Building on this progress, Governor Warner's Workforce Initiative will expand his Education for a Lifetime program to Virginia's adult workforce. This initiative will help provide an opportunity for all Virginians to raise their education level, learn important work skills, and earn a wage that allows them to support their families. The Workforce Initiative will also help employers by providing them with better-educated and better-trained employees and a workforce training system focused on their actual training needs.

The Governor's Initiative has three parts: (1) increasing the education levels of Virginia's workforce by doubling the number of GEDs earned in Virginia; (2) creating a career readiness certificate that gives workers a portable, recognized workforce credential and shows employers that job seekers have the required job skills, and (3) reorganizing Virginia's 22 workforce development programs into a more streamlined and effective workforce development system that provides a better-trained workforce to employers and greater employment opportunities for Virginia's workers.

Race to GED

The economic benefits of getting a GED are indisputable:

- ✦ A Virginia worker with a GED or high school degree makes more than double the income of a worker without a GED or degree — \$22,000/year instead of just \$10,000/year.
- ✦ More than 700,000 working-age Virginians (18-64) do not have a GED or high school diploma.
- ✦ In 40 out of the 134 localities in Virginia, more than 30 percent of adults do not have a GED or diploma. The overall education level of a workforce is a critical factor in attracting new businesses and jobs.
- ✦ The Governor's Initiative will double the number of Virginia workers earning GEDs by

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Education for a Lifetime

2005 – raising the current average of 10,000 per year to 20,000 per year by 2005.

✦ Doubling the number of GEDs awarded in two years will be accomplished through two major initiatives:

1. Targeted marketing efforts across the Commonwealth aimed at educating adults about the financial and personal benefits to getting a GED.

A statewide partnership between NASCAR, NASCAR racing teams, and the Commonwealth to show workers how to “accelerate your earnings” by getting a GED.

2. Creation of pilot “Fast Track GED” programs in at least five regions of the state by 2004. These pilot programs will identify individuals most likely to benefit from a GED and encourage them to participate in an intensive, three-to-four month GED training program.

Career Readiness Certificate

Currently, Virginia does not have a portable credential that confirms to employers that an individual possesses basic workplace skills. The Governor’s Initiative will create a new Career Readiness Certificate that will inform all employers that the Certificate holder has reached an employer-recognized level of workforce literacy.

✦ The Certificate will ensure employers that the worker has achieved a competency level in several basic skills areas that all jobs require, including reading, math, writing, and locating information.

✦ All Virginians will be able to earn a Career Readiness Certificate by taking basic skills assessment tests administered in a variety of settings – One-Stop Career Development Centers, community colleges, local depart-

ments of Social Services, and other appropriate locations.

Several other states have created similar certificates to objectively assess a person’s work skills, and the program has wide acceptance in the business community. The Governor will work with governors in neighboring states in an effort to expand the initiative so that the same Career Readiness Certificate would be recognized and accepted by employers in a multi-state region.

Streamline Workforce Services

Building on Governor Warner’s efforts during the past year, the Governor’s Workforce Initiative will strengthen the delivery system for workforce training and services.

✦ The current system of 22 programs in 10 agencies spread across three secretariats is an unworkable model for the future. Among those 22 programs, there are overlaps in service and some of the 22 programs are not performing as well as they could.

✦ The Governor’s Initiative will involve all the stakeholders in an effort to develop a workforce training delivery system that is keyed to the job requirements of our employers and that will give our workers competitive skills training for a lifetime of work. By streamlining the system, the Governor’s Initiative will benefit both employers and employees and ensure that Virginia’s workforce is well prepared for the jobs of the 21st century.

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